

State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Jim Doyle, Governor
Scott Hassett, Secretary

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November 10, 2004

Deborah L. Orr
USEPA REGION 5, SE-4J
77 West Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, IL 60604-3507

Subject: Wisconsin's Brownfields Reinvestment Initiative: EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant Application for Hazardous Substances

Dear Ms. Orr:

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) is applying for \$200,000 in hazardous substance grant funds to conduct community-wide environmental assessments and clean-up planning. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) is leading a multi-partner initiative to raise the reinvestment profile, and thus quality of life, in some of Wisconsin's most-needy neighborhoods. As a first step in this state-wide initiative, WDNR is seeking assessment funds for the 30th Street Industrial Corridor area in the City of Milwaukee. The WDNR has put together the Wisconsin 30th Street Industrial Corridor Partnership, consisting of the Redevelopment Authority (RACM) of the City of Milwaukee, the 30th Street Industrial Corridor Corporation (ICC), and WDNR. The WDNR hopes to reproduce Wisconsin's Brownfields Reinvestment Initiative in other needy communities over the next several years.

Given the difficult economic times of the last several years, local governments, state governments and non-profits are finding it more and more difficult to apply for and use the limited public resources that are available to address urban quality-of-life issues. Since 2000, WDNR's clean-up program has lost 37 staff (by of July 1, 2005) or 39% of its state staff. This has made it more difficult to undertake new initiatives, despite the presence of these needy areas and federal brownfield dollars. Therefore, WDNR has put together the Wisconsin 30th Street Industrial Corridor Partnership consisting of the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee (RACM), the 30th Street Industrial Corridor Corporation (ICC), and WDNR. The goal of the partnership is to jointly seek assessment, cleanup and other resources in order to raise the reinvestment profile of this area. RACM is a redevelopment agency sanctioned by Wisconsin and a land clearance authority operating under supervision of the City of Milwaukee. The ICC is a non-profit, 501 (c) (3) that assists businesses on the north side of Milwaukee, with their expansion efforts and also works to attract new businesses to the area. The reinvestment partnership hopes to conduct at least 10 Phase I environmental assessments, and full site investigations and clean-up planning for four properties.

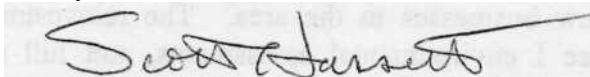
The 30th Street Industrial Corridor area was identified as the first reinvestment, target neighborhood by WDNR, given the economic and demographic statistics (2000 US Census data, unless otherwise noted) of the neighborhood, including:

- 97% of the residents are considered "minority";
- a third of adults lack a high school diploma;
- neighborhood manufacturing has declined from nearly 40 percent to less than 15 percent over the last 30 years;
- median household income over the last 20 years has resulted in the aggregate purchasing power of the neighborhood dropping by more than one-third;
- across the entire neighborhood fifteen percent of housing units are vacant, in some blocks more than 25 percent;
- the area within a one-mile radius of the approximately five-mile long 30th Street Industrial Corridor has a population of 31,918;
- approximately 11,838 children under the age of 18 (or 37% of residents) live within this area;
- about 18.5% percent of the labor force was not employed in 2000;
- the area's median household income (\$24,472) was close to half of the state's median income; and
- 34 percent of the residents lived below the poverty level, well above the City's rate of 21 percent and the state's average rate of 9 percent.

This area's 230 known brownfield properties or areas threaten public health (e.g., exposure to contaminated soil and airborne contaminants, presence of illegal drug markets, and dangerous buildings), the environment (i.e. contaminated groundwater discharging to surface water), and impose a blighting effect (i.e. graffiti, weeds, trash dumping) on this economically disadvantaged neighborhood. Lead poisoning is another public health issue threatening the area. Statistics show that in 1998, 19.5% of the children tested in Milwaukee had blood lead levels equal to or above 10 ug/dL. This is about 5 times the national average of 4%. These unacceptable exposures are present in a neighborhood that has the fewest resources available (i.e., access to health care and insurance, as well as living wage jobs) to deal with such health concerns.

The WDNR and its partners hope that the Wisconsin Brownfields Reinvestment Initiative will raise the quality of life in this neighborhood, and subsequently others, by providing much-needed environmental information on neighborhood properties. The partnership is committed to working with the neighborhood to seek funds to address the environmental, redevelopment, and social issues associated with the targeted properties. Such a partnership will allow the public and private sector to: reinvest in this neighborhood's economy, address public health concerns and create more recreational opportunities for the residents. In turn, this first initiative will be used as a model for other such partnerships throughout the State of Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Scott Hassett", is written over a light-colored rectangular background.

Scott Hassett, Secretary
Attachment